

**Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn, June 22, 1807,  
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.  
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester  
Ford.**

**TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR J. MSS. (HENRY DEARBORN.)**

June 22, 1807.

I suggest to you the following, as some of the ideas which might be expressed by Genl Wilkinson, in answering Govr Saludo's letter. The introductory and concluding sentiments will best flow from the General's own feelings of the personal standing between him & Govr Saludo:

On the transfer of Louisiana by France to the U. S. according to it's boundaries when possessed by France, the government of the U. S. considered itself entitled as far west as the Rio Notre; but understanding soon after that Spain, on the contrary, claimed eastwardly to the river Sabine, it has carefully abstained from doing any act in the intermediate country, which might disturb the existing state of things, until these opposing claims should be explained and accommodated amicably. But that the Red river and all its waters belonged to France, that she made several settlements on that river, and held them as a part of Louisiana until she delivered that country to Spain, & that Spain, on the contrary, had never made a single settlement on the river, are circumstances so well known & so susceptible of proof, that it was not supposed that Spain would seriously contest the facts, or the right established by them. Hence our government took measures for exploring that river, as it did that of the Missouri, by sending Mr. Freeman to proceed from the mouth upwards, and Lieutenant Pike from the source downwards, merely to acquire its geography, and so far enlarge the boundaries of science. For the day must be

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very distant when it will be either the interest or the wish of the U. S. to extend settlements into the interior of that country. Lt. Pike's orders were accordingly strictly confined to the waters of the Red river, & from his known observance of orders, I am persuaded that it must have been, as he himself declares, by missing his way that he got on the waters of the Rio Norte, instead of those of the Red river. That your Excellency should excuse this involuntary error, & indeed misfortune, was expected from the liberality

of your character; & the kindnesses you have shewn him are an honorable example of those offices of good neighborhood on your part, which it will be so agreeable to us to cultivate. Accept my thanks for them, & be assured they shall on all occasions meet a like return. To the same liberal sentiment L Pike must appeal for the restoration of his papers. You must have seen in them no trace of unfriendly views towards your nation, no symptoms of any other design than of extending geographical knolege; and it is not in the nineteenth century, nor through the agency of your Excellency, that science expects to encounter obstacles. The field of knolege is the common property of all mankind, and any discoveries we can make in it will be for the benefit of yours and of every other nation, as well as our own.